

The LOVE LETTERS
of a LIAR

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THE LOVE LETTERS OF A LIAR

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BY
MRS. WILLIAM ALLEN



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I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK
TO THE MEN WHO COULDN'T
WOULDN'T AND DIDN'T
WRITE THESE LETTERS

TO MY CRITICS

*“A BEASTLY ambition, which
the gods grant thee t’attain
to! If thou wert the lion, the fox
would beguile thee; if thou wert the
lamb, the fox would eat thee; if thou
wert the fox, the lion would suspect
thee, when peradventure thou wert
accused by the ass; if thou wert the
ass, thy dulness would torment thee,*

TO MY CRITICS

and still thou livedst but as a breakfast to the wolf: if thou wert the wolf, thy greediness would afflict thee, and oft thou shouldst hazard thy life for thy dinner: wert thou the unicorn, pride and wrath would confound thee and make thine own self the conquest of thy fury; wert thou a bear, thou wouldst be killed by the horse: wert thou a horse, thou wouldst be seized by the leopard: wert thou a leopard, thou wert german to the lion and the spots of thy

TO MY CRITICS

*kindred were jurors on thy life: all
thy safety were remotion and thy de-
fence absence."*

—TIMON OF ATHENS.

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OF A LIAR

New York, January 10, 1899.

I THINK you will believe me when I tell you that you have filled my heart and brain ever since some "good-night words" that you remember. You spoke with a prophetic confidence when you said you could bring back all my love for you if you

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cared to try. You have brought it back, sweetheart—if, indeed, it ever went away—brought it back in such a flame of color and passion that all other women in the world seem ghosts and shadows, as in the old days.

Is it only for an experiment that you have done this—is it only to test your power? If this was all, then you are more cruel even than you are beautiful, and I—just one more fool.

The quiet years—the years

you wrote me of as so easy and humdrum and safe—I think have gone, and the old wild, thrilling hope of boyhood, which after all, even in the deepest shadows, never left my heart entirely—the hope that in the hidden chambers of your being your boy sweetheart was still your best and dearest — that hope has come back, and will stay with me until I carry it down into the grave. And with it comes and lingers a passionate longing to

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be with you “and touch you and breathe you and live.”

Five years, you say, will come and go before opportunity comes again. And are you content? God help me, I am not ! It shall not be, and if you really love me it will not. Is my whole life to go by with these long-separated glimpses into paradise and then the dull level of life's desert sands for years and years? I swear to you before God, and in all reverence for Him, that I be-

lieve if ever woman on this earth owed the gift of happiness to the man she loved you owe it to me, if you do really love me. Somebody says, "We love our lost loves for the love we gave them and not for anything they gave our love." Are you going to make that a bitter truth in my life forever and ever? I do not want, heaven knows, to bring any disturbing influence into your life—but oh, dear, *dear* sweetheart, I do so hunger for

happiness! And nobody in the world, by fate's or God's or fortune's inscrutable chance, can bring me the supreme happiness that ought to crown every man's life but *you*. You speak to me about other women. Never for a moment have you doubted that you could bring me across the world from any other woman; perhaps it would have been far better for me if this had not been so. You know it—you have always known it—but you did

not care to call me. Now I am not a boy any more—I am a man with graying hair and many sad memories and most of his illusions gone. And yet in spite of this I dream of a happiness sweeter than heaven, of which life still holds a possibility—and that happiness lies in your sweet open hands, my dearest, and no one else in the world can give it to me but you.

Now, what are you going to do? Are you unwilling to face

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this storm that you chose to re-awaken, or are you willing to say: "He has loved me all his life and I love him for that, if for nothing else, and he shall not love me any more in vain!" Will you say that?

I do not know why I have dared to write you this, except that life is slipping by and age comes before we know it. Somehow, when I am with you I cannot speak these things that crowd my heart. But if there be any-

thing in the communion of spirits, you must have heard mine crying to you, pleading with you, for the love of God, to give me what is mine.

You cannot reply to this with any force by referring to any other episodes in my life. As I said before, there has not been any time in which you could not hold me and draw me to you and mould my life as you will. I could have said, with the old dramatist, and said at any mo-

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ment these many years, with some degree of truth:

Why, I hold fate clenched in my hand, and could command the course of time's eternal motion, hadst thou been a thought more constant than the ebbing sea.

Now, isn't there some way for me to see you? God knows that not even for my own happiness would I have you run any risks for me. And let me beg of you right here—promise me, darling—that just as soon as you have read this letter you will destroy

it and all others of mine. Believe me, it is the only way.

I do not know how you will treat me after this letter. I know what I hope, but I know, too, how often hope has failed. And I have hidden so much pain behind the smiling lips you call weak, that if the old lesson is learned over again I shall not find any new sensation in it. I have lived too long—I am too old to drench a midnight pillow any more with the tears of vain re-

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gret. But oh, sweetheart, I *do long for happiness!* “So many things must conspire to bring about a perfect opportunity.” I write the words from memory, but they stay with me. A perfect love, my darling, will make a perfect opportunity; and if you love me thus I will “command the course of time’s eternal motion” to hold you on my heart again.

Good-night. I am very tired and sad, and happy, too. I am no coward, I swear it; but yet I

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almost fear to try to storm the heights on which all that I love in all the world awaits my victory.

LAWRENCE.

II

New York, February 2, 1899.

MY SWEETHEART :

I have read your letter over and over and *over*, and now that I know it by heart, I know, too, that you are dearer to me than ever before—if such a thing be possible.

“What do you ask of me?” you say in it; and I answer in loyalty and perfect faith, in Ten-

nyson's words, that you will
"Lay your sweet hands in mine
and trust to me." That is all—
that you tell me you love me
and trust me.

Thrilled through as it has
always been with passionate
longing, all my life my love for
you has been to me a holy and
sacred thing, pure as the per-
fume of a flower; but, let me
say what is true, stirring my
blood with the same intoxicating
perfume that some flowers pos-

sess. I *know* you understand me. I believe you understand that even if you came when I were dying and bent over me, and I felt your tears on my face I should be happy if you said: "He gave me all his life all the love he had to give a woman, and all the passion—and the passion and the love were both without a stain."

"The gift of happiness?" My darling, you have made me happier than I hoped again to be in

my life. Not the perfect happiness that would be mine on earth if you were all my own—body, soul and heart mine only. Fate or God or chance or destiny has made this seemingly now impossible—but because you have yielded to your womanhood and owned you love me ; because you have given me the fulfilment of the hope that lived through all the desolate years that some day the sweet lips would tell me so ; because you

have promised me that my life hereafter shall not be altogether divided from yours; because of these things I hold in my heart to-night the gift of happiness, just as my arms have held it to my heart to-day.

You are not afraid of your love for me, are you, sweetheart? or of mine for you? I sometimes think that, after all, knowing only one life as we do and nothing of that beyond, the heart should know its own happiness

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as well as its own bitterness, and that love, when we find it, should be the God who puts all things under Him and for whom the world is well lost. If you are mine and I am yours, and we are all in all to each other, then what matters anything else? Love is enough! It is a terribly fascinating thought, and there is some sense of strong rebellion, too, at fate that makes you mine and yet not wholly mine. And yet you have not misjudged the

man to whom you said: "I love you." I would rather go away from out your sight and never see you any more than make you live ever to regret that you told me this. Such is the love I bear for you to-night, my darling, with the touch of your hands still throbbing through my pulses, and the perfume of your lips still on my own.

I think I understand what it has cost you to tell me all you have. I believe I do realize what

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it is for a woman like you to love. And if I have ever misunderstood you and failed to comprehend I shall try never to do so any more. And I want you always to treat me just as your mood prompts you to treat me, fondly or laughingly or mockingly or tenderly, as best suits you. I don't want you ever to be sorry in your life for one single moment that you have given your heart into my keeping.

For me—I hardly realize it

yet ; I am stunned, almost, with the joy of it, and “ all my nights are trances and all my days are dreams.” And yet, in spite of all the pain and grieving and the bitterness of the old years, somehow the hope that has now been realized never, I think, altogether left me ; and let me say to you with truth that the realization was sweeter than the hope that filled a thousand dreams with flame. I deny that anticipation is better than fruition. I have

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felt more rapture crowded into one brief hour this day than in ten years of hopes and dreams. There is more of joy for me in the soft pressure of your little hands—there is more of heaven in the fragrance of your mouth than any heaven that hope can ever bring.

I am writing you straight from my heart of hearts, and what I write I feel. Let us have no mental reservations. We are not boy and girl any more, but

man and woman. If the love you bear for me should ever wane—if mine should ever weary you, if any other should come between us, I want you to be honest and tell me so. Even if it wrench my heart out by the roots, I do not want to live one hour in a fool's paradise. And, sweetheart—my dear, *dear* love—will you not grant the request that I again make to you to destroy my letters? I know the fear is remote, but so much of

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peace might depend for you on their non-existence, that even now I feel it is almost cowardly for me to write them. Will you not do this, my darling, for my sake and because I ask you to? You will not misunderstand this request. You will know that the heart that honors while it loves you holds your safety and happiness above everything else on earth.

Good-night. It seems to me I could write you thus forever.

OF A LIAR

Do not write to me unless and until you want to. I shall understand. I shall see you, I trust, in three days. Until then my life will be a dream, and that dream the sweetest woman in all this world.

LAWRENCE.

III

New York, February 8, 1899.

MADGE :

Do you know that you have written me the most beautiful letter I ever received in my life, and the most effective ?

I am not ashamed to tell you, my beloved, that part of it I have read through tears. It has made me happy, it has wrung my heart, it has appealed to all that

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is best and noblest in me, it has made me understand you even more than I ever did before, and I thought I knew you to your heart's sweet core, my love! What has this letter done for me? It has touched my ears and thrilled my heart with the sweetest music God gives man to hear on earth—the melody of a true woman's love crying for tenderness and protection against itself.

I cannot conceive of any cir-

cumstance or any situation or any catastrophe that would take one iota from the reverence and respect I render to your womanhood along with a passion so deep and thrilling that I myself do not understand or comprehend it. I know that I am the one love of your life, as you are the only real one of mine.

I believe that over and beyond the bonds and limitations that men have made—and properly made, I admit—there is nothing

that love like ours does not sanctify and glorify, and I could take you in my arms, *all mine and wholly mine*, even to the feet of God, and say, "I bring her whose sacrifice to love has left her in my eyes and heart as sinless as your angels, and no possible heaven where *she* is not could ever be anything but hell for me."

I should always feel the same for you forever, forever. I know it.

It has been a part of my life to give you my homage. It will be until my life shall end, and yet to-night, after this letter of yours, I recognize, perhaps for the first time entirely, our fate, and I bow to it.

Never, so help me God—and I write these words, as I read yours, through tears, and with an entire realization of what they mean—never will I cause you any anxiety on this subject knowingly or willingly again. I make the

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renunciation to-night of the hope I had hardly realized I cherished, and, whether pain accompanies that renunciation or not, I am not unhappy, because I know that you are mine in spirit, if not in body; because I believe that you will be changeless, and because, whether or not on earth, you are ever mine—mine only. I shall know *the white life still is white*.

I mean this, sweetheart. It is true I am writing under the powerful influence of your tender

and beautiful letter. But I have thought it out besides, and taken this stand after hours and hours of striving between passion and the desire to do right.

You have said I wanted strength. It must be mine to show you that this is not true. I have it, and I pledge it to you this night, with a great sob in my heart.

Oh, well, Madge, why should the sob be there? Am I not decorated in a way that kings are

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not? Have I not what I have longed for all my life, and should I not be content?

I am happy in your love, dear—oh! immeasurably happy—and then it is best, no doubt, that something should be held back from us, lest earth grow too much like heaven and we worship love more than God.

You have asked me whether, if all our heart's desires could have been fulfilled I could have been faithful to you all my life,

as long as you lived, however much divided from you? Yes, sweetheart, I could. I call on your faith in my truth and my love for you to believe and to know that. That is all I can say now.

The test will never be made—at least, until I can prove my constancy to the world as well as to you—and that time, perhaps, may never come. For the present I have put some “days and dreams out of mind, days that

are over, dreams that are done.”

But I shall love you all my life. You know it. There is no poem that I ever read, no poem ever written, and no song ever sung, that could describe my feeling for you, as I know it. Perhaps some day I may write that song.

Have I answered your questions, darling? I have tried, and from an honest and loyal heart.

Your letter is so sweet and tender and passionately beautiful. It is the very supremest expres-

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sion of a true love and a true womanhood I ever read.

Good-night, heart's dearest;
good-night, my life's one love. I
never loved you more than in
this hour.

LAWRENCE.

IV

New York, March 4, 1899.

DARLING:

I waited for the message, but it did not come, and I feel that I cannot sleep to-night until I have spoken to you across the silence—to tell you how more and more each hour and day you fill my life. Does God give love like this of mine for you to many men, I wonder? Words seem

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so weak, so poor, to tell how every word and gesture, how every passionate and rapturous memory of you, burns and throbs and beats through my heart until I feel I must go mad for longing and for joy. Who am I, to be loved by a woman like you and with such love as you have given me? You have bestowed upon my life a new purpose—you have made it a thousand times worth living—you have made me to believe and *know*

that human life can reach a point of happiness no possible heaven could ever excel. That is what your love is to me, sweetheart. I swear it to you—and knowing what it means to me, I think you should never regret a single memory of it. I do not dare to think or hope it has made you one thousandth part as happy as it has made me. An English poet says:

Love can but last with us here, at
this height,
For a day and a night.

But for me, I know it can last until the final day of life and the "death-hour rounding it." But for you—ah, God! there is the fear that will creep in and chill. Am I to lose you after I have won you? Is the old agony to be lived over again? Have I climbed thus near to the heaven of my dreams only to see the gates shut on me at the last? Will you not teach me some way, sweetheart, that I may make you mine forever? For

you are mine now, “sweet eyes, sweet mouth; sweet cheeks, sweet throat, sweet hair—each singly wooed and won.” Will the day dawn in which I shall know that they are mine no more? If it ever does, I hope to God I may not live to see its sunset. Do you remember what I told you was my dream last night—“how mad and bad and glad it was, but then, *how it was sweet?*” Dear sweetheart, I am only a very human man, desper-

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ately in love with you, who does not hold his life at a pin's fee compared with your happiness. You know better than I what brings you happiness or can bring it. If I can know surely what your own heart wishes, then, at whatever cost or renunciation, so help me God I will try to bring it to you, But for a little while, sweetheart, at least, let me dream—let me dream that you are away with me, “lost in the night and the light of the sea,” drifting toward

that magic land where *all our hopes and dreams come true.*

And as Kipling says:

It's God knows what we should find, dear
 lass,

And it's God knows what we should do.

But I think the voyage would be the sunniest a ship ever sailed, and the land we found would be fair.

Oh, what, after all, is life, and how should we use it? Is not one hour of love worth years of the dead, death-pale duty, the dull, passionless existence that

so many human hearts wear out against their mortal bans? It is not every heart to whom is given the power of supreme love and supreme pain and supreme joy. Shall those who find it lose it because—they know not why? And yet, how can one argue of these things? They cannot be reasoned out. Love is like religion—a thing of faith only and impulse. And so all my argument and reasoning are set at naught, and drowned in the

memory of a last “embrace in which two white arms held me fast.” Oh, thank God for memory now. I used to hate it, and think the best boon time could bring would be forgetfulness. But now—no, a thousand times no!

I fear you will think this an incoherent letter. I am writing only because my heart is suffocating with its passion. Good-night. I am going away in the ship of dreams. Do you know who is

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going with me? Listen while I
whisper down through your
breast into your heart. One is
going on that ship who will put
white arms around my throat
and say:

Ask me no more, my fate and thine are
sealed;

I strove against the tide and all in vain.

Let the great river take me to the main.

No more, dear love—for at a touch I
yield—

Ask me no more.

LAWRENCE.

V

New York, May 3, 1899.

MADGE:

I have your letter and I do not know whether you mean what you say in it or not.

You know I love you, if you know or believe anything. You love me, too, very dearly—you have told me this, and God knows you have proved it. But you appear to have no faith in

me. I do not understand how love and faith can be separated. If I have tried to make you understand anything, it has been that I am happiest when with you, that the sight of your face is my heaven—and yet you practically charge me in your letter with neglect.

I do not think you are too exacting. Love is always exacting, but it is generous and considerate and forgiving, too. A heart that loves—with faith—

would know and tell itself: "He is not here—I am not in his arms, through no lack of longing on his part, but because he is held away from me by a force he cannot guide. And instead of reproaching him, my love for him grows deeper and stronger every hour."

It seems to me this is the way a loving heart would speak, but perhaps I do not know. Oh, please don't quarrel with me, but love me and believe in me, and

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understand that you are the one
thing on earth that I love with
all my heart and soul.

LAWRENCE.

VI

New York, September 10, 1899.

MADGE:

Here are the answers to the questions you ask, and which I am asked to give you before the past is hermetically sealed.

Yes, I was unfaithful to you at Narragansett. I remember, when I bade you good-bye in July, that you said you had a premonition that it was forever ; but I laughed

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at the idea. I remember that I did avoid the answer to your questions, in my letters—I thought I would tell you all about it when I saw you, and I went to Newport intending and expecting to do so. But I tell you now that I do not recollect any questions or allusions to the matter made by you while I was there. Nor do I remember, save so vaguely that I cannot venture to recall it here, what, “when I bade you good-bye, I made you

swear to." I received the letter saying you would return on a certain day. My mail was delayed—I was nervous. Newport had made me think that you would not really care much whether I came or not, and I dreaded the heartache and misery of explanations. Not brave, perhaps, but God's truth.

Yes, I am to marry a very dear and lovely girl, and I love her. She is rich, so I have heard since my engagement, but I knew

nothing of this when I asked her to marry me. I do not suppose the world at large will believe this, but I do not care what the world believes. I want to try and be a better man, to catch some years of peace and contentment, and to be, as nearly as I can, worthy of her.

I shall be glad to come to see you sometimes if you will let me.

In all the sorrow and all the happiness the past has held for

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me, I have never harbored a bitter thought or spoken a bitter word of you.

LAWRENCE.

VII

New York, September, 1899.

MADGE:

I have read carefully what you sent me, a copy of all my letters, as you asked me to do.

I did not lie to you then. I believed it to be true, nor did I believe any change would come. I do not lie to you now. She is a dear and lovely girl, and she is rich. She has said she would

marry me, and I want to try to be worthy of her.

I have suffered. My heart has been wrung—beyond what any words of mine can tell you—at causing you pain. God knows this is true.

She fixed the date for the 20th of October, after she left New York. My foreknowledge was the understanding only that the engagement was not to be a long one. She has told her family and friends, as I have mine.

Everybody who knows her or me practically knows the date that has been set. She has asked all her bridesmaids, and the costumes have been ordered for that time.

How *can* I change the date? Yes, I know it was the 20th of last October that I told you I loved you. I beg of you, for the sake of one who, I think, never gave anyone pain knowingly in her life, to withdraw your request, for the sake of my

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sister, whom you know and esteem, for the sake of my dead mother, whom you used to love.

I know there is no service that you would ever accept from me now, if I could render it, but one who has gone down on his knees and asked God's forgiveness in agony and tears makes this appeal to you. I ask you to try and think more gently of me.

I am going to try with all my endeavor to be a better man, to act as one who is trying his best

hereafter to do right. Will *you* not help me? I ask you, I appeal to you, if not for my sake, for the sake of a girl who should not suffer for my faults, not to ask this of me.

Just forget your own suffering, your own humiliation. And remember, her wealth can advance me politically. My ambition is dearer to me than any woman. Grant my request, and send me a telegram saying, "I do!"

And in this last letter, and to

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my dying day, I ask God's mercy
and tenderness and protection
for you.

LAWRENCE GODDARD.

VIII

*Washington, D. C.,
September 18, 1899.*

LAWRENCE GODDARD, ESQ. :

Your letter of September 16th to poor misguided Madge came to me by mistake. It requires much talent and much more feeling to break off an attachment amiably than to begin it. Hence I return to you the letter meant for her, so you can despatch it forth-

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with. Such ingenuity of expression should not be relegated to the waste paper basket. As for myself, I find, after careful investigation, that my bank account is not sufficiently large to maintain myself and your political ambitions. So we will "call it off." Good-bye.

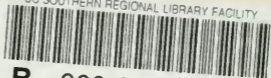
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